

## Recommendations

Generally, the purpose of a best practice review is to encourage the use, or adaptation, of particular techniques, methods or processes. However, based on the information and feedback obtained through the review process, the State Auditor is making three specific recommendations.

### **1. The State Auditor encourages the creation of organizations similar to Scott County's "SCALE" organization in every county in Minnesota.**

SCALE is a voluntary association of local governments in Scott County whose express purpose is to foster cooperative agreements between local governments within the county.

Cooperative efforts often work best when they come from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. The SCALE model takes this sort of commonsense approach to promoting and encouraging local cooperation. This approach has little cost for local governments and is an excellent example of how local governments can work cooperatively to develop new ways to deliver public services more efficiently and effectively.

This recommendation requires no legislation. It does require a desire by local officials to create a more formalized process for studying and implementing local cooperation in their area. To help encourage the implementation of the SCALE across Minnesota, this document includes in Appendix E a copy of SCALE's bylaws. In addition, Appendix F includes examples of some of SCALE's materials.

SCALE's main strength is that it fosters communication and builds trust among local governments, two of the most important elements in successful cooperation. It brings together all the stakeholders and makes them equal partners. Because of this innovative approach, local government officials in Scott County are constantly thinking of new ways to cooperate.

Of course, SCALE's example should only serve as a guideline, and should be adapted by local officials to fit the needs of their area. However, this sort of voluntary cooperative effort should be easy to adapt to any given locality. Please read more about the SCALE example in Appendix A.

### **2. Re-establish Grants and Waivers to Encourage Local Cooperation.**

It is important that the State become more involved in promoting cooperation in local government service delivery. Therefore, the State Auditor recommends re-establishing the cooperation incentive grant program and waiver process of the

former Board of Innovation and Cooperation. Doing so would help encourage local governments to engage in more innovative and cooperative efforts in public service delivery.

For the new effort to be successful, it would be important to learn from the experiences of the past as outlined in the Legislative Auditor's report cited in this review.<sup>54</sup> This new effort would need to do a much better job promoting the waiver process by showing local governments the benefits of applying for, and receiving, waiver relief. In addition, the new enabling legislation would have to streamline the waiver process and broaden the authority to grant waivers.

Given the current lean budget times it may be impractical to reinstate the grant programs immediately. However, the new effort should be constituted to be able to provide cooperation incentive grants once funding becomes available.

The State Auditor will work with legislative leaders to determine what form this waiver and grant process should take.

### **3. The State Auditor will hold an annual "Roundtable on Cooperation".**

To continue the encouragement of cooperative efforts across Minnesota, the State Auditor will sponsor an annual "Roundtable on Cooperation." The purpose of the roundtable would be to bring local officials together to share their experiences on local government cooperation as well as hear from experts on cooperation from Minnesota and around the country.

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<sup>54</sup> Office of Legislative Auditor: "State Mandates on Local Governments (00-01)", January 26, 2000.